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Report of
Committee of the
Albany, New York
Chamber of Commerce
appointed to investigate
the question of
Moderate Cost Houses



September 1910

COMMITTEE
OF THE
ALBANY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Appointed to investigate the cost of
Moderate Cost Houses

Edmund N. Huyck, Chairman
De Lancey M. Ellis
William B. Jones

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OF THE
ALBANY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
FOR 1910

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Report
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FOREWORD

The Board of Trustees of the Albany Chamber of Commerce have for a long time recognized the need in Albany of houses that would rent at a monthly rental within the means of the average man. These houses to be located near the trolley lines and to have the necessary modern improvements. The housing problem underlies almost every social problem that presents itself in the life of the working classes and one of the greatest possible uplifts not only to a city but to the individual family is a modern house—even though it be small—equipped with the necessary modern conveniences and situated so that at least a small lawn can surround it on all sides.

Some investigations were made two years ago and much interesting information secured. During the early part of this year a special committee was appointed by the Trustees for the purpose of completing these investigations. At its meeting June 7th, 1910, the Trustees authorized the printing of the report of this committee together with such photographs and plans as might seem of value.

To The Board of Trustees,
Albany Chamber of Commerce

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GENTLEMEN.—

Your committee appointed to investigate the question of moderate cost houses respectfully submit the following report:

Your instructions were to investigate the possibility of building houses under present conditions of cost of labor and materials that would bring a fair net return on the investment at a monthly rental of not to exceed \$18. Fully realizing that the cost of all the essential elements of construction have materially increased in the past decade, we determined to confine our investigation to houses that have actually been built during the last two or three years. Furthermore, we have endeavored to select locations where conditions of cost should be as nearly as possible similar to local conditions. The possibility of the scheme is being proved constantly in such cities as Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit and many others where rapid industrial development is making absolutely necessary the erection of thousands of houses for workingmen, but the expense of securing information from such remote centres, and the fact that the very different conditions which govern the cost of construction would make such information less valuable for our purpose, have led us, instead, to present the following examples of what has actually been accomplished in localities comparatively near to Albany.

We have visited several towns and have personally inspected many of the houses described in this report, most of which have been built within the past year. We have every reason to believe the cost of construction as given us by the owners or builders are accurate and reliable and we are convinced that it is possible to erect houses containing modern conveniences that can be rented at prices which the average man can afford to pay.

Believing that the greatest need in Albany is for detached houses, each for a single family, we have given most of our attention to this type, though some examples of two family designs are presented which in cost and arrangement seem to us to entitle them to consideration.

For convenience, the report has been subdivided into two chapters:

1. ONE-FAMILY HOUSES;
2. TWO-FAMILY HOUSES.

All of the figures given are exclusive of the cost of the land.

ONE-FAMILY HOUSES

At Amsterdam, N. Y., the committee found some exceptionally attractive as well as convenient houses that have lately been built by the Rockton Realty Company. They are two story frame houses with stone cellar and built in a substantial manner. Outside dimensions 23' x 28', with a piazza extending across the entire front and a covered porch in the rear. Height of ceilings, first story 8' 6", second story 8'. House piped for gas and wired for electricity. First floor contains hallway, living room (12' x 14'), dining room (11' x 12' 6"), kitchen (10' x 10' 6") which has a stationary boiler, running water, granite sink and a kitchen cabinet. Second floor contains three bed rooms—12' x 8' 6", 10' x 12' and 9' 6" x 10' 8", also a convenient bath

which contains modern open plumbing, porcelain lined tub and nickel plated fixtures. The interior finish is No. 1 kiln dried cypress; the floors on both first and second floor No. 2 N. C. pine except in the bathroom which is maple.

These houses in a group of ten were erected in 1909 at a cost of \$1,800 each. For the sake of contrast two styles of exterior construction were adopted, the cost being the same.

The pictures of the exterior of each style are shown in plates I, II and III and floor plans in plates Ia and Ib. The plans and full working specifications have been submitted to the Bureau of Buildings of the City of Albany, have been approved and may be found in the rooms of the Chamber of Commerce.

We have given these houses special attention because they seem to us to combine attractiveness in appearance, with the greatest number of conveniences and an admirable arrangement of the rooms, and further because they have been built in a nearby town within the past year. Furthermore, we have secured from the builders of these houses a statement that they stand ready to build in Albany ten houses on the same plans and specifications for the same price, that is, \$1,800 each, thus effectually disproving the statement which has frequently been made, that conditions of the building trades and the cost of material in Albany make it impossible to accomplish the same results as economically as elsewhere.

At Schenectady, the three attractive houses shown in plate IV were erected by Peckham, Wolf & Co. during the past winter at a cost of \$1,800 each. These houses are similar in construction and material and finish to those in Amsterdam. They contain the same number of rooms on each floor; contain a bath with open plumbing and have in addition a large attic with convenient stairway.

The committee also inspected a number of houses built at Ludlow, Mass. by the Ludlow Manufacturing Associates for their employees.

One group of houses, known as the Weston Cottage No. 1, contains six rooms and a bath, each house having a frontage of 21' and a depth of 27'. The houses are finished practically the same as those at Amsterdam. They cost approximately \$1,800 to build. The elevation is shown in plate V and the floor plans in plate Va.

Another style costing about \$300 more is shown in plate No. VI.

The firm of Witherbee, Sherman & Co. has made a very comprehensive test of the building of concrete houses, both in concrete blocks and with stucco finish at its industrial village, Mineville—five miles from Port Henry. About fifty houses have so far been erected at very low costs under conditions which are said by the officers of the company to be no more favorable than in Albany except in the cost of the refuse iron ore tailings of which the concrete blocks are made. This material in the proportion of 1 part cement to 5 parts tailings may be moulded into a strong and attractive block, and could be used in Albany at a comparatively low cost. In the interior one inch furred strips are nailed to the inside of the block and upon these wooden laths are nailed. Pulp plaster is employed, the floors are single, either of birch or maple and the roofs are of second quality Green Granville slate. On account of the locality there is no plumbing or water supply.

One group of these houses containing six rooms are 21' 10" x 30' 4". The first floor contains 3 rooms, 8' 1" x 12' 4", 15' 8" x 12' and 11' 5" x 8' 7". The second floor contains 3 rooms, 11' 5" x 8' 7", 8' 1" x 12' 4" and 12' 4" x 15' 8". These houses cost \$1,000 to build. The addition of plumbing and water supply would probably increase the cost not to exceed \$300.

Another group of houses, the elevation of which is shown in plate No. VIII and floor plans in plate VIIa, cost the same firm \$1,025 each to construct. This type is about 30' x 26'. First floor has living room (12' 8" x 10'), dining room (14' x 14'), kitchen about 9' 5" square, pantry (9' 6" x 4').

Second floor has 3 rooms, 10' 9" x 14' 2", 14' x 9' 6" and 12' 6" x 10'.

A seven room house has also been erected at a cost of \$1,100. See plate X.

TWO-FAMILY HOUSES

The Ludlow Manufacturing Associates at Ludlow, Mass. have erected several types of two family houses, two of which are described below.

The type called the Plymouth Cottage is an eight room twin house with piazzas and entrances on the side. The entire house has a frontage of 30' 6" and a depth of 28'. Each of the two tenants has on the first floor a living room (10' 11" x 15' 3"), kitchen (13' 8" x 11' 3") and two large closets with small hall, and on the second floor, two bed rooms (10' 11" x 15' 8"—11' 8" x 11' 3") and a bath. These houses were erected at a cost of \$2,600 each. Plate XIIa shows floor plans.

The company has also erected a twelve room twin house which they have named the Longmeadow Cottage. This house has a frontage of 33' 6" and a depth of 38' 9". A piazza extends partially across its front from which each apartment is entered. Each of the two tenants has on the first floor a parlor (11' x 13' 3"), living or dining room (11' x 16' 9"), kitchen (10' 9" x 16' 9") and hall; stairs winding up from center or living room. The second floor contains 3 bed rooms (10' x 16' 9"—10' x 13' 3"—10' 9" x 10' 9") and a bath with ample closets from each bed room. These houses were erected at a cost of \$3,400 each. Plate XIIIa gives the floor plans.

The firm of Witherbee, Sherman & Co. have also built at Mineville some attractive twin houses of concrete blocks. These houses have a total frontage of 52' 4" and a depth of 29' 4". They contain fourteen rooms, allowing for each tenant three rooms on the first floor and four on the second. Those on the first floor are 10' x 12' 6"—13' x 14'—11' x 13' 2", and on the second floor 8' 3" x 12' 3"—11' 9" x 12' 11"—9' 3" x 15' 5"—9' 5" x 10' 4". These houses cost the company \$2,650 each, this price not including any plumbing. For elevation see plate XI and for floor plans see plate XIa. The houses built by Witherbee, Sherman & Co. at Mineville are described at length in an illustrated article in the "Cement Age" of September, 1909.

At Barre, Mass., some convenient two family twin houses were built during 1908 and 1909 and more are in the course of erection by the Barre Wool Combing Co. The foundations are concrete, the houses are frame, shingled. The interior is finished in cypress and the floors are rift hard pine throughout. These houses contain twelve rooms, allowing for each of the two tenants three rooms on the first floor, size being 11' 3" x 10' 6", 17' 3" x 11' 3" and 11' 3" x 11' 6", also a good sized pantry. On the second floor three rooms, 13' 6" x 11', 10' x 11' and 11' x 11' 6". The latter room being generally used as a bath. The cost of each twin structure including plumbing and range was \$2,067.43. The elevation of the house is shown in plate VII and the floor plans in plate VIIa.

At Schenectady the committee found an exceedingly convenient two family house designed by C. G. Van Rensselaer of Schenectady. This house is 24' 6" x 48'. The first apartment contains parlor, dining room, kitchen, three bed rooms and a bath, together with hallway and

several good sized closets. Second floor contains an additional room which may be used as a small reception room. A large porch is built on the rear with stairways. Cellar arrangement for heaters, coal bins and other conveniences. The house has slate roof, birch veneer doors and hard pine trim all through. Finished floors of Georgia pine. Plumbing is white enamel iron with nickel plated pipes where exposed. Hot air heating. This house has recently been completed at a cost of \$3,400. Floor plans shown in plates XIVa and XIVb give a good idea of its convenient arrangement.

SITES

The committee has also investigated the question of available locations. Sites have been found in various parts of the city, some within a short walking distance of large manufactories and others within a few blocks of trolley lines. Both improved and unimproved properties have been located but all of the sites selected are level, thus requiring practically no expenditure either for fill or excavation. The varying dimensions of the sites selected, the difference in cost per square foot on account of location and the fact that some properties are on improved streets, others partially improved and still others without any improvements whatever, make it impracticable to furnish the necessary data in this brief report to permit of intelligent consideration on the part of a prospective purchaser. Furthermore, it is believed that some of the sites at least may be obtained at a figure somewhat lower than that asked for them if a bona fide offer were to be made.

The full data that the committee has gathered in reference to sites is on file at the Chamber of Commerce for the inspection of interested parties. Furthermore, the working plans of all the houses referred to are likewise on file and in some instances complete specifications have been secured. Access to all of the above material may be had upon application to the Secretary.

The results of our investigations have convinced us that it is possible to build desirable houses in Albany to rent at not to exceed \$18 per month and in reaching that conclusion we have based our calculation on the gross yearly return of 10 per cent on the investment. We furthermore believe that Albany capitalists and manufacturers who realize the need of such development in this city will be willing to employ their funds in the building of houses on this basis.

Respectfully Submitted,

EDMUND N. HUYCK

DELANCY M. ELLIS

WILLIAM B. JONES

Committee



PLATE I.—Front elevation of house erected by Rockton Realty Company at Amsterdam, N. Y. Cost, \$1,800.00. Floor plans, Plates Ia and Ib.



PLATE II.—Front elevation of house erected by Rockton Realty Company at Amsterdam, N. Y. Cost, \$1,800.00. Floor plans, Plates Ia and Ib.



PLATE III.—Rear elevation of house erected by Rockton Realty Company at Amsterdam, N. Y. Cost, \$1,800.00. Floor plans, Plates Ia and Ib.



PLATE IV.—Group of houses erected by Peckham, Wolfe & Co. at Schenectady, N. Y. at a cost of about \$1,800.00 each.



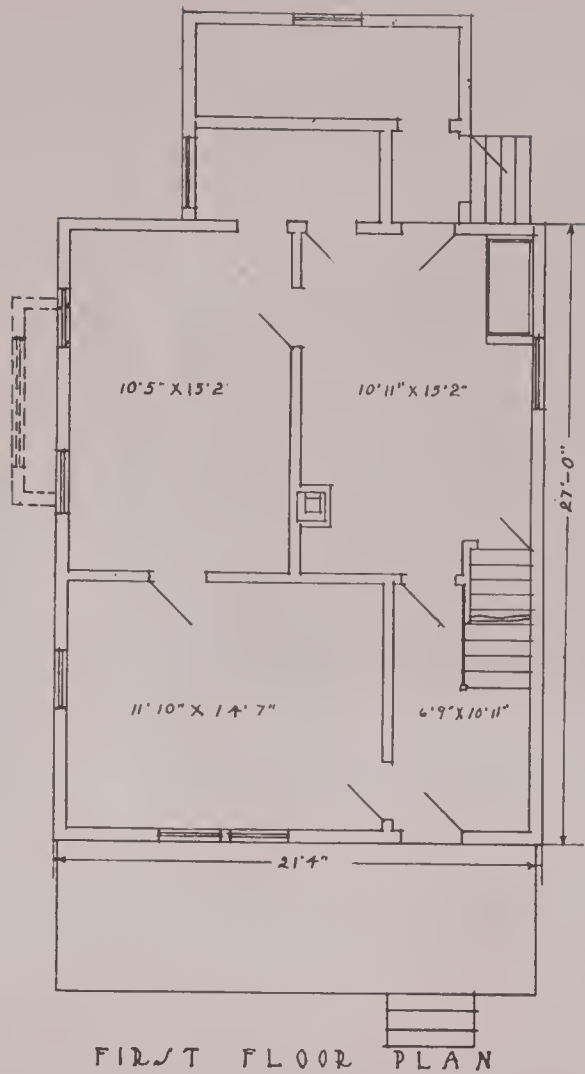
PLATE V.—The Weston Cottage, No. 1, erected by the Ludlow Manufacturing Associates at Ludlow, Mass. Cost, \$1,800.00. Floor plans shown on Plate Va.



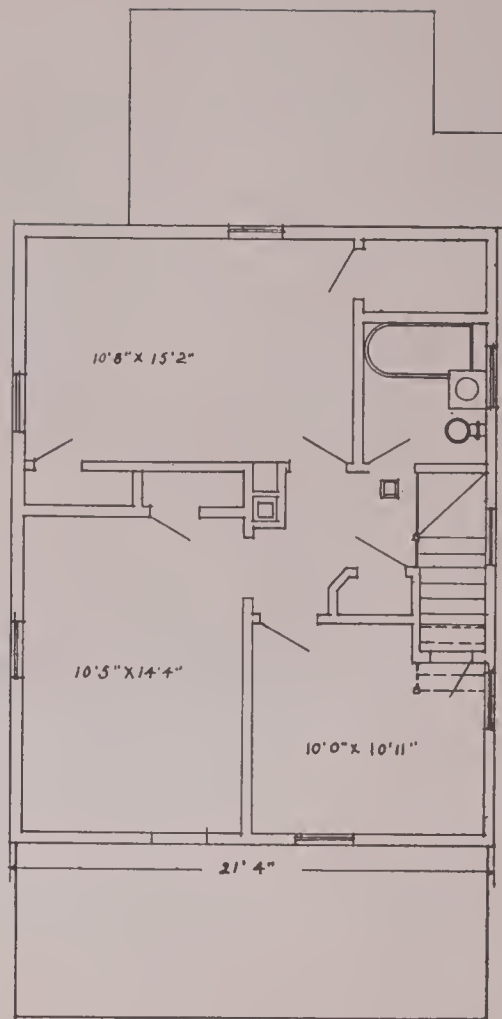
PLATE VI.—Group of houses erected by the Ludlow Manufacturing Associates at Ludlow, Mass. Interior arrangements about the same as the Weston Cottage, No. 1. Cost, about \$2,100.00.



PLATE VII.—Two family, twin houses, erected at Barre, Mass., by the Barre Wool Combing Company at a cost of \$2,067 43. Floor plans plate VIIa.

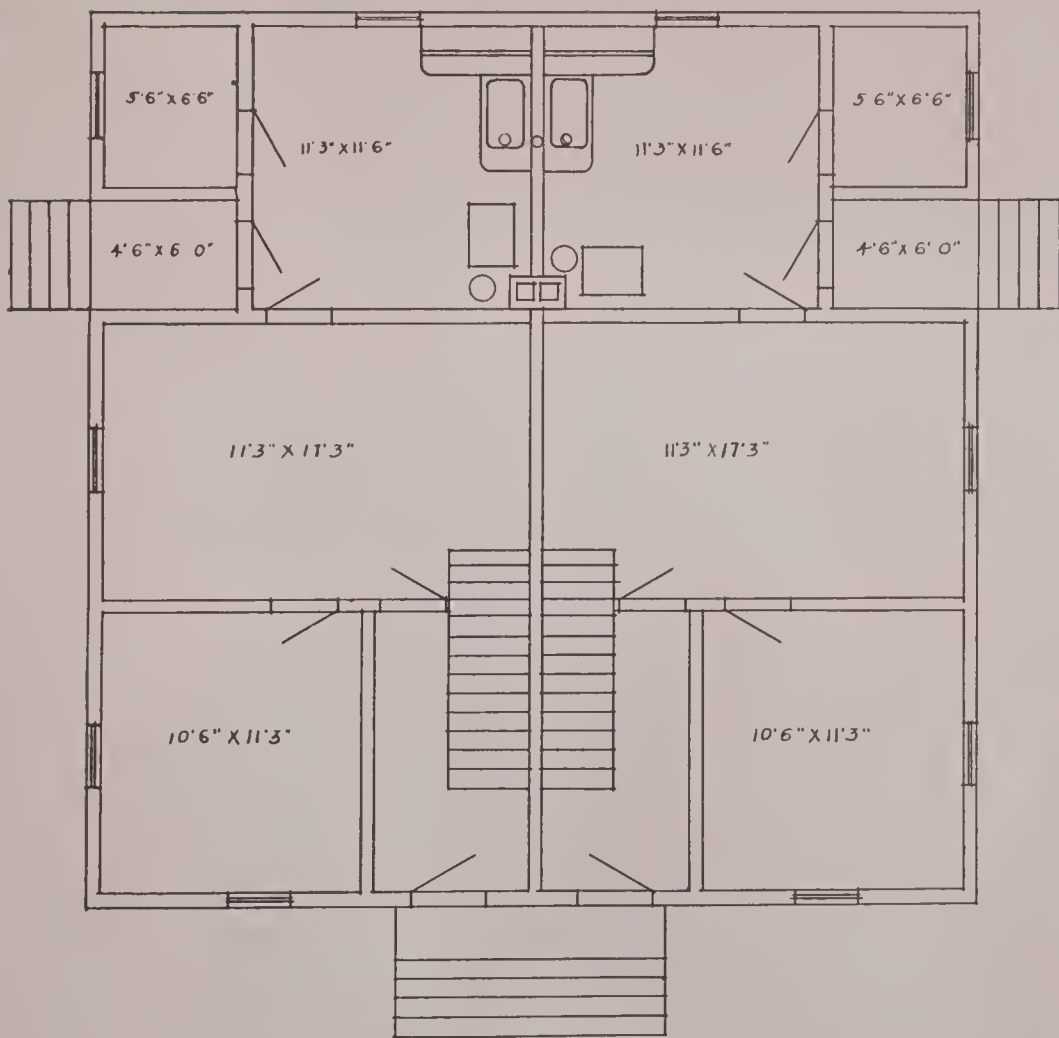


FIRST FLOOR PLAN

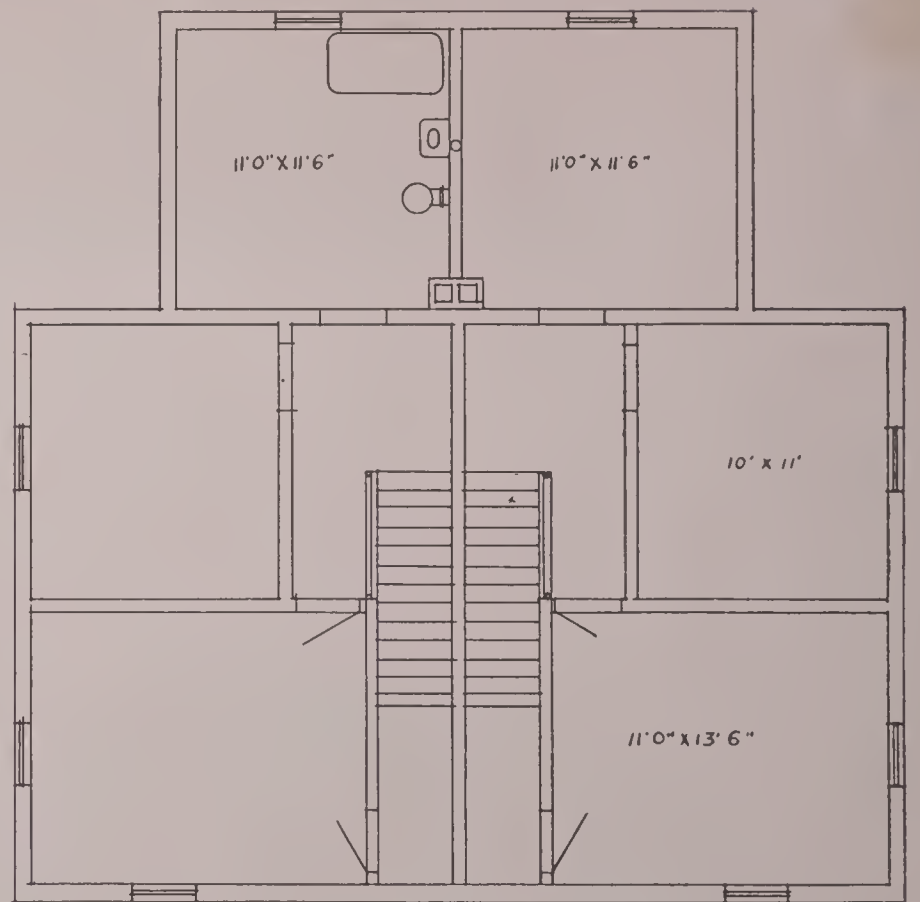


SECOND FLOOR PLAN

PLATE Va.—Floor plans of Weston Cottage, No. 1, erected at Ludlow, Mass. by the Ludlow Manufacturing Associates. Cost, \$2,600.00. See Plate V for elevation.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

PLATE VIIa.—Floor plans of two-family twin house erected at Barre, Mass. by the Barre Wool Combing Company at a cost of \$2,067.43. House shown in Plate VII.



PLATE VIII.—Concrete-block house erected by Witherbee, Sherman & Co. at Mineville, N. Y. Cost, \$1,025.00. Floor plans, Plate VIIIa.



PLATE IX.—Group of concrete houses built at Mineville, N. Y. by Witherbee, Sherman & Co. Six rooms and unfinished attic. Size, 25' x 22'.



PLATE X.—Seven room concrete house erected by Witherbee, Sherman & Co. at Mineville, N. Y. at a cost of \$1,100.00.



PLATE XI.—Twin house built of concrete by Witherbee, Sherman & Co. at Mineville, N. Y. Cost, \$2,650.00, exclusive of plumbing or heat. Floor plans, Plate XIa.

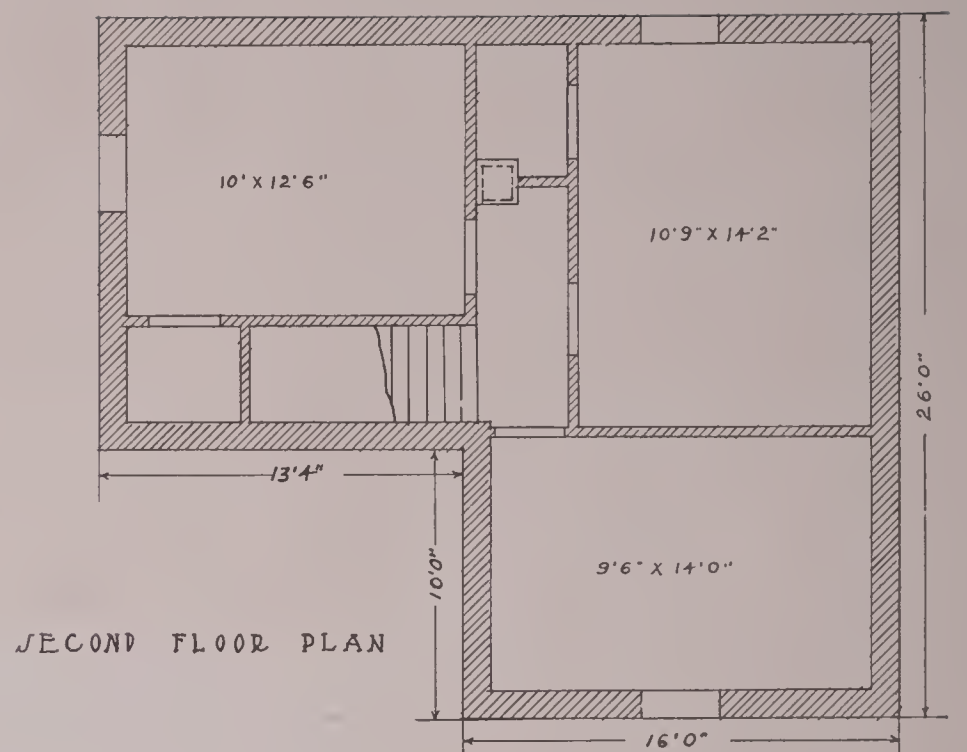
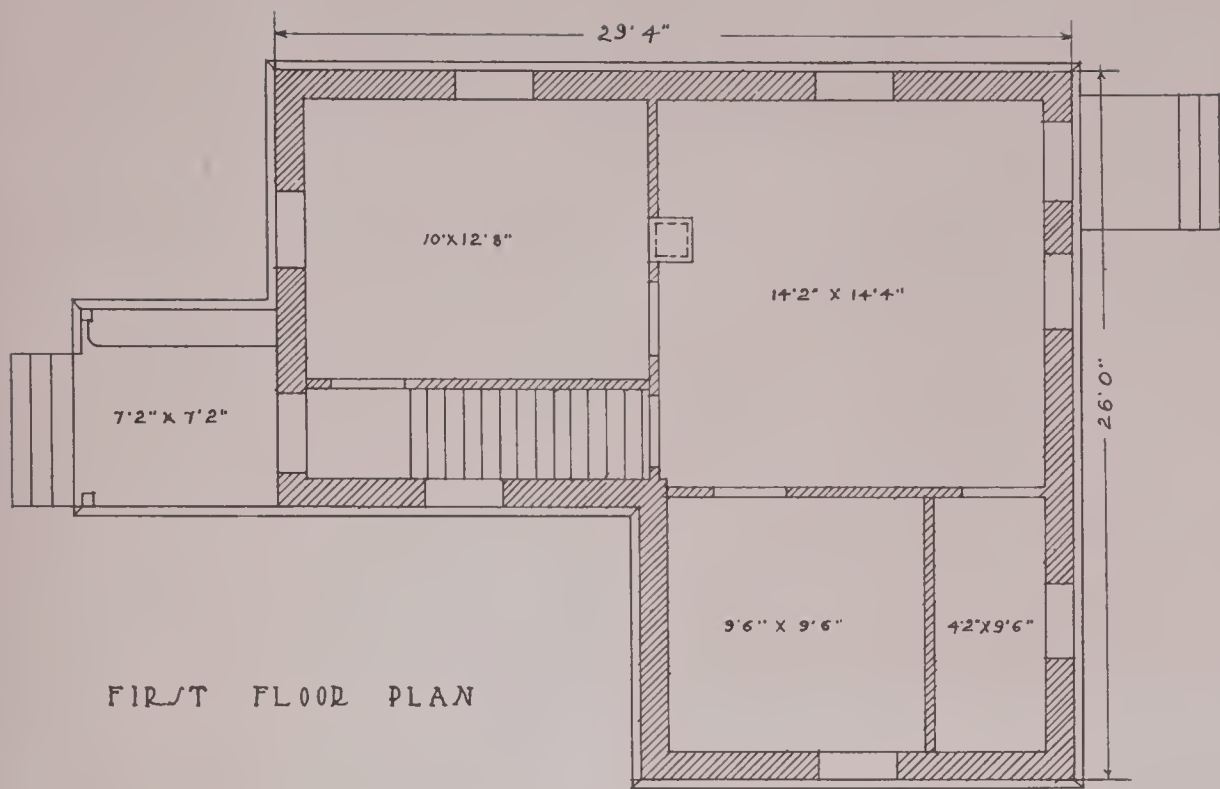


PLATE VIIIa.—Floor plans of concrete house erected at Mineville, N. Y. by Witherbee, Sherman & Co. Cost, \$1,025.00. Elevation shown in Plate VIII.

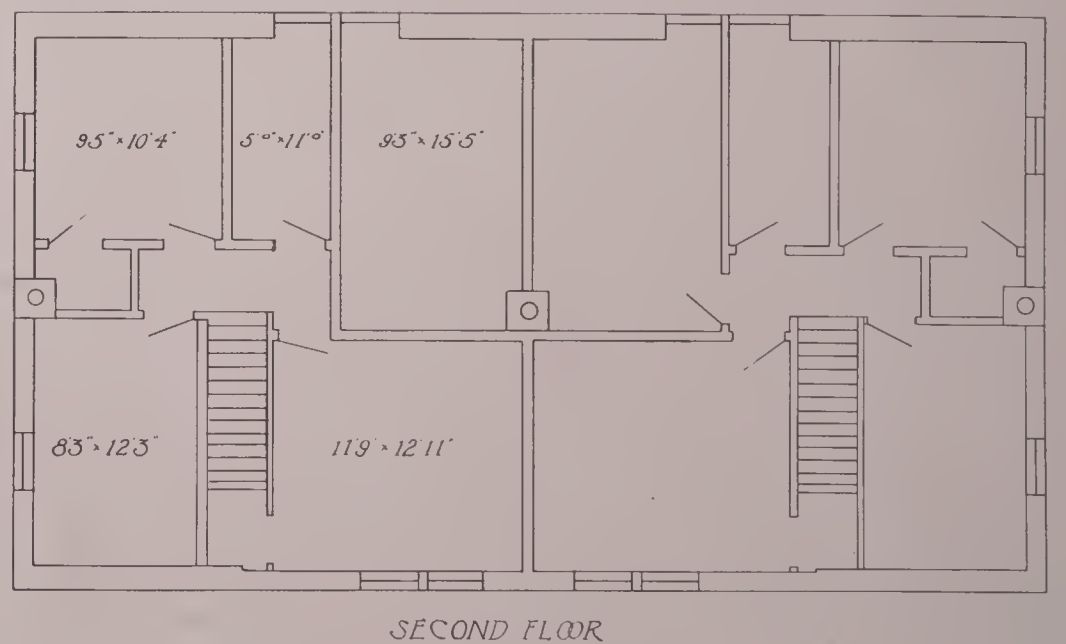
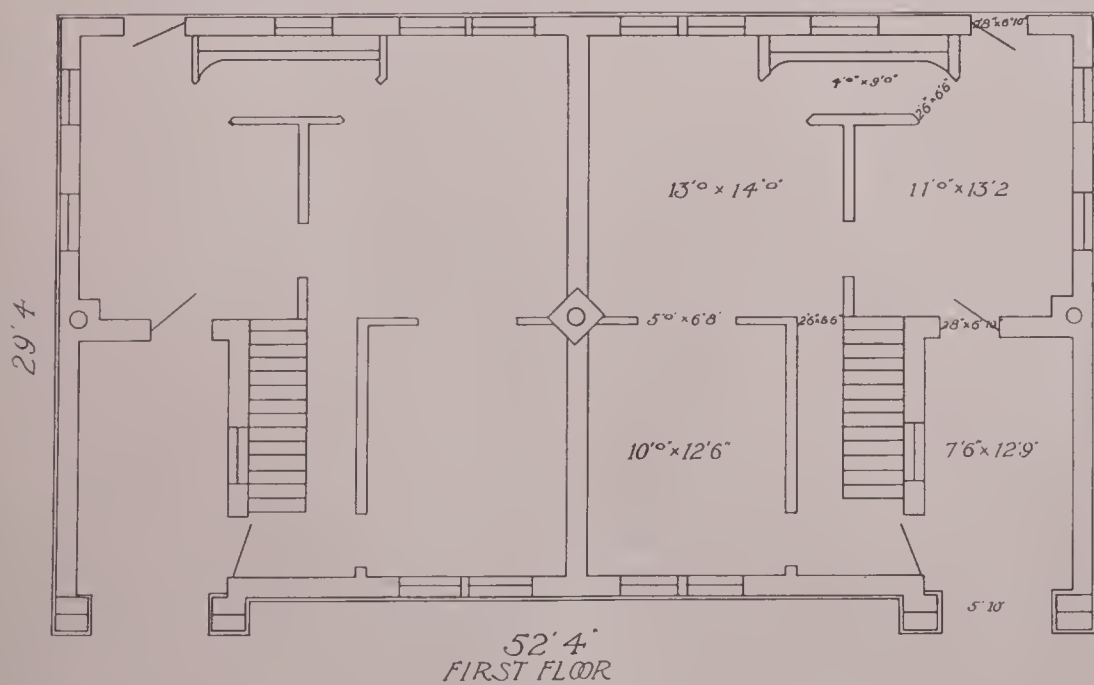
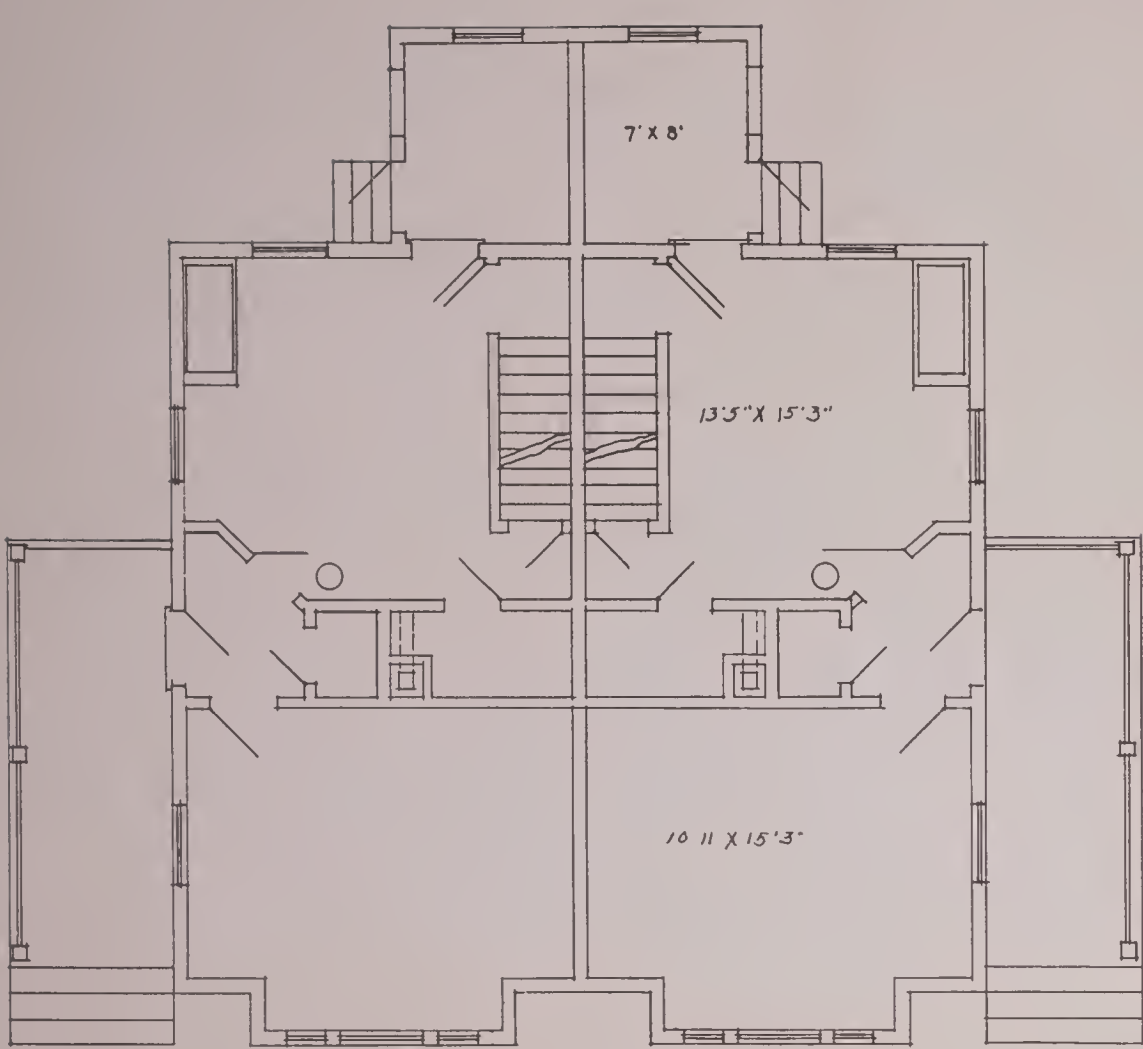
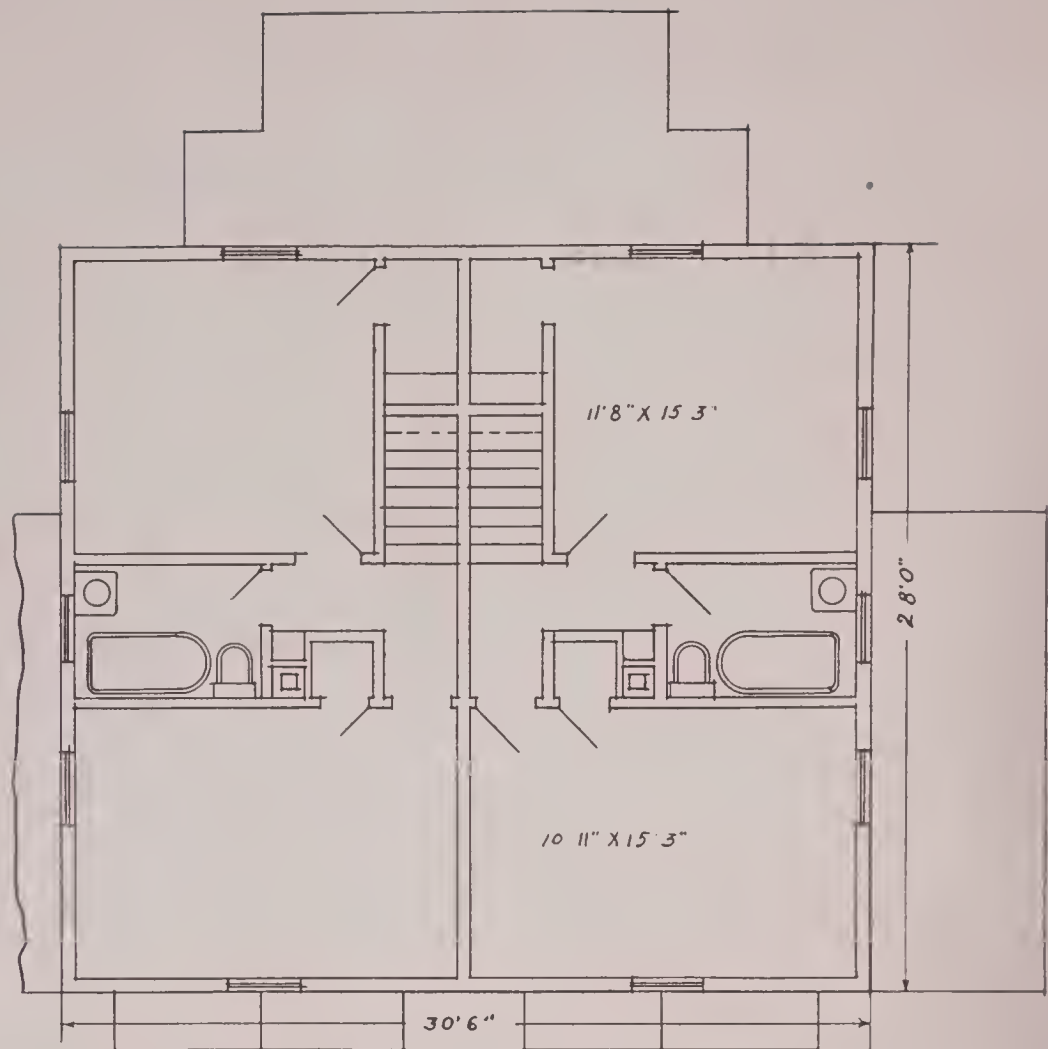


PLATE XIa.—Floor plans of twin house built of concrete and erected by Witherbee, Sherman & Co. at Mineville, N. Y. Cost, exclusive of plumbing or heat, \$2,650.00. House is shown in Plate XI.

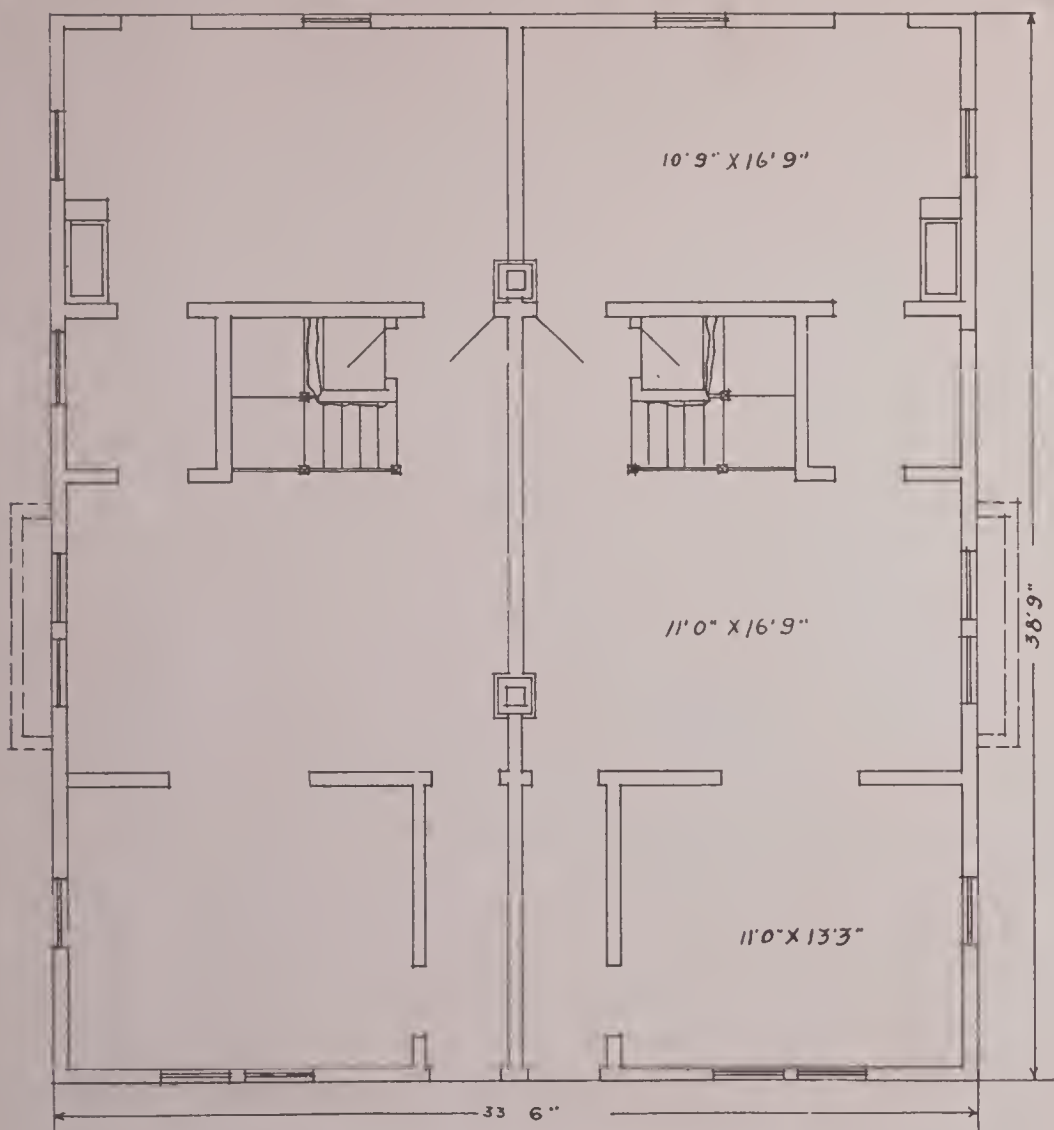


FIRST FLOOR PLAN

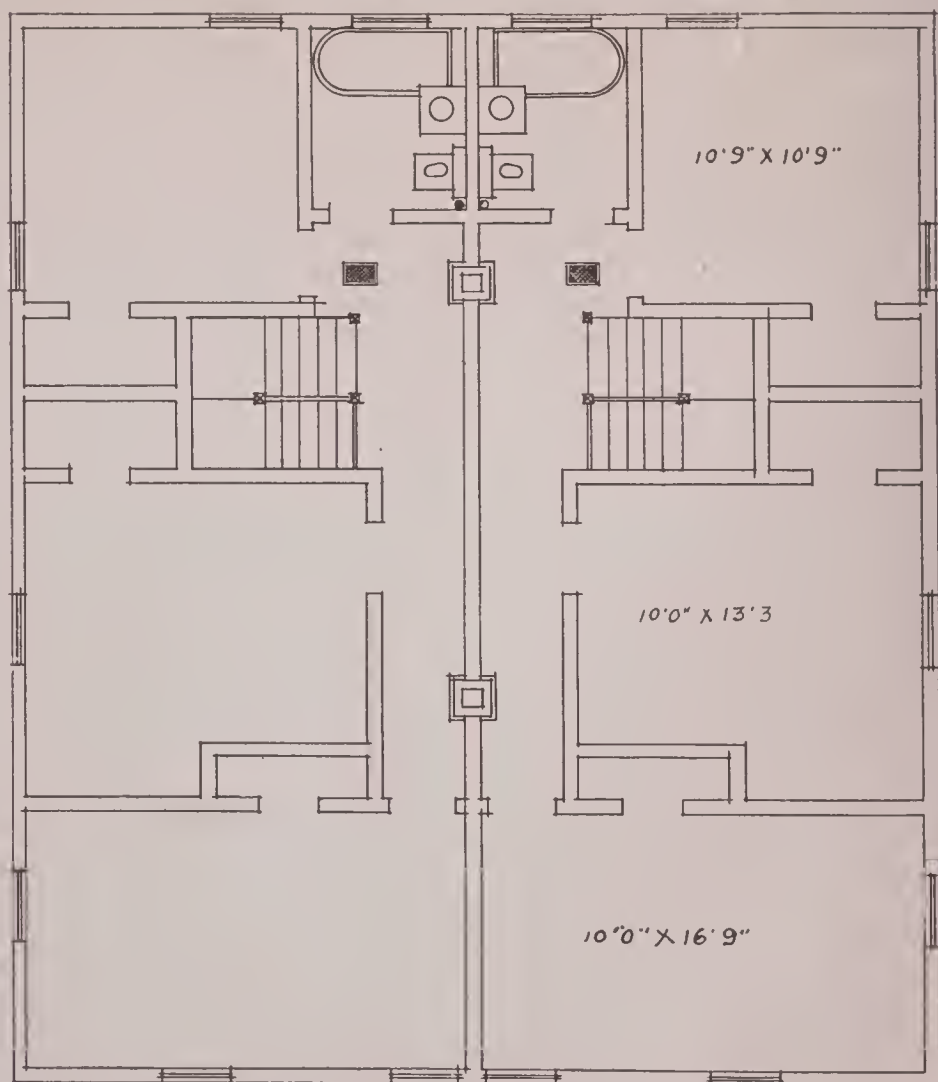


SECOND FLOOR PLAN

PLATE XIIa.—Floor plans of Plymouth Cottage. An eight room twin house erected by the Ludlow Manufacturing Associates at Ludlow, Mass. Cost, \$2,600.00.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

PLATE XIIIa.—Floor plans of Longmeadow Cottage. An eight room twin house erected by the Ludlow Manufacturing Associates at Ludlow, Mass. Cost, \$3,400.00.

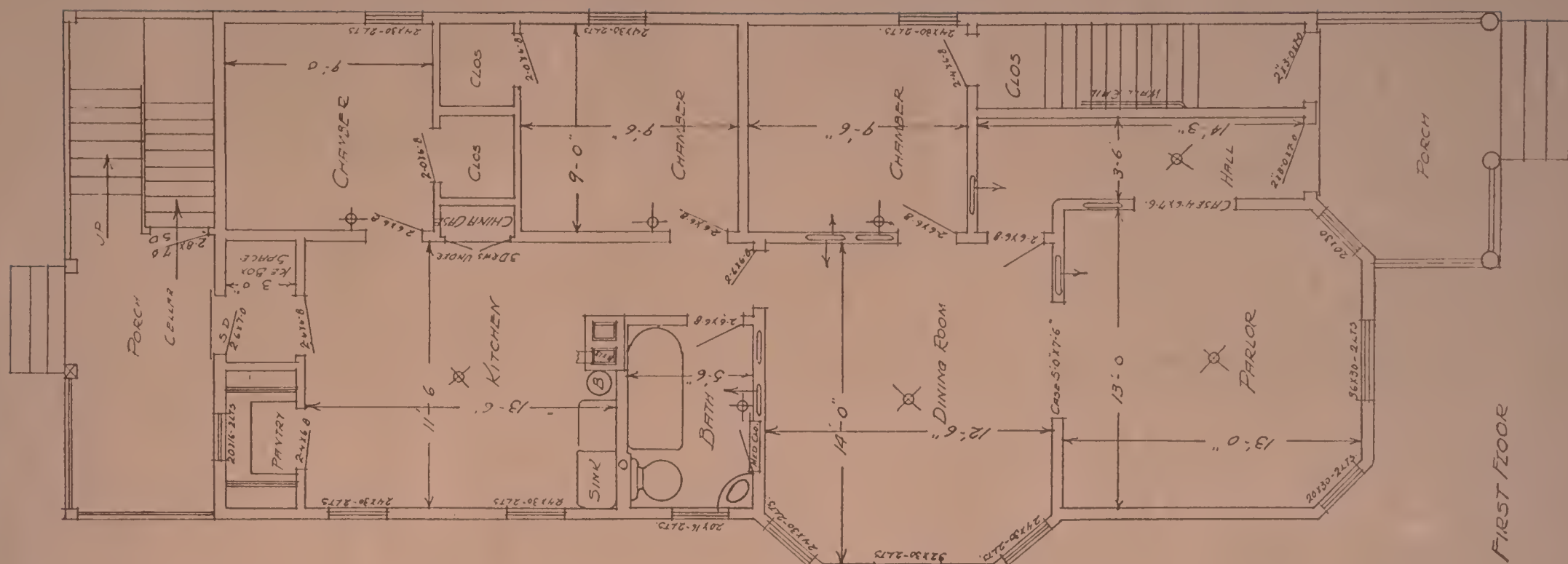


PLATE XIVa.—First floor plans of two-family house erected at Schenectady, N. Y., from plans drawn by C. G. Van Rensselaer of Schenectady, N. Y. Cost, \$3,400.00.
Copyrighted, 1910, by C. G. Van Rensselaer, Schenectady, N. Y.

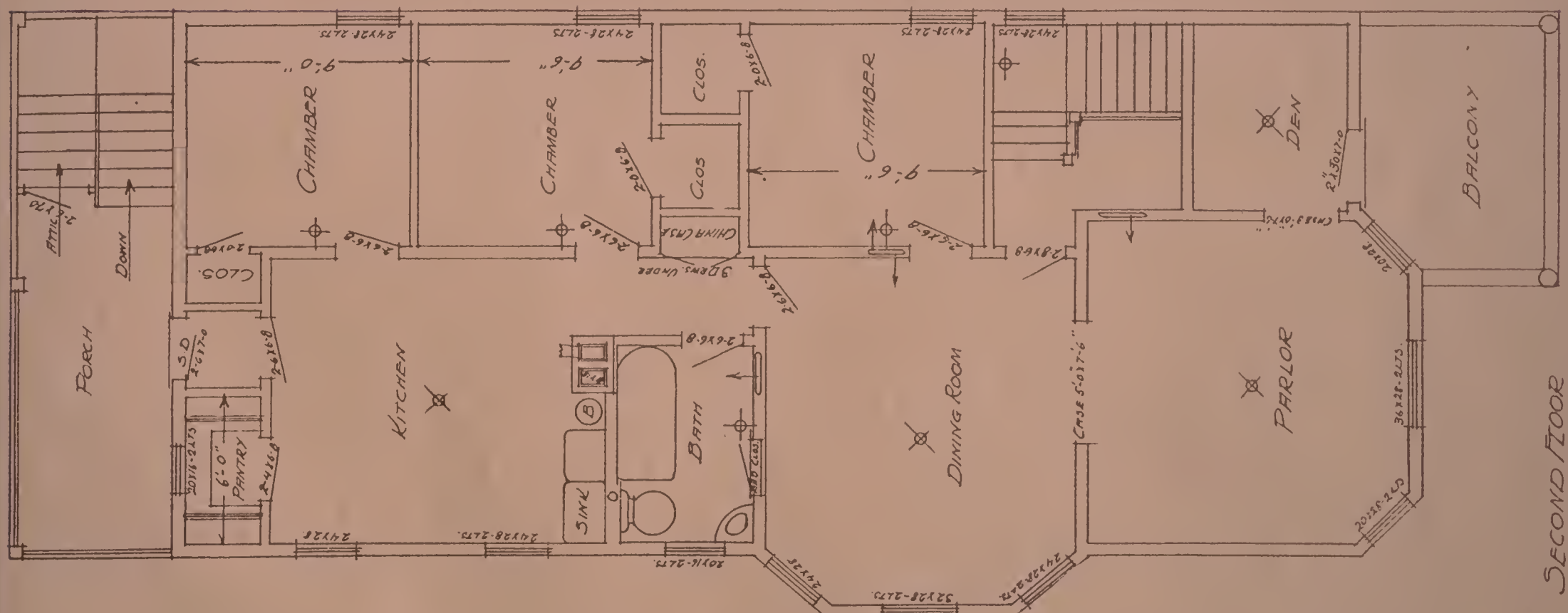


PLATE XIVb.—Second floor plans of two-family house erected at Schenectady, N. Y., from plans drawn by C. G. Van Rensselaer of Schenectady, N. Y. Cost, \$3,400.00.
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